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ABSTRACT

Two surveys were recently conducted to obtain a perspective on the future of student services in Canada. The first survey, conducted in 1982, sought the opinions of senior student services officers, college presidents, and student council leaders in Ontario concerning the level of emphasis that was desirable for and likely to be given to 43 student services and college functions in the Ontario college system. All three groups ranked student placement first in terms of desirable level of emphasis, followed by student counseling for student services personnel, pre-college information for college presidents, and financial aid for student council presidents. With respect to predictable level of emphasis, student service officers and presidents ranked placement first, while student council presidents ranked computing services first. As part of the second survey, conducted in 1983, senior student services officers from 61 colleges across Canada (excluding Ontario) were asked to respond to questions concerning the major forces influencing the future of student services, levels of support to be expected, the major role of the head of student services, and the major contributions of student services to the college. Responses from 20 colleges indicated that vocational assessment, job search, learning assistance centers, work experience placement, and aptitude and interest testing were expected to be the areas receiving the greatest support in the next 5 years. (HB)

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FUTURE OF STUDENT SERVICES IN COLLEGES

SPEECH AT ACCC CONFERENCE

Vancouver, British Columbia

May 30, 1984

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FUTURE OF STUDENT SERVICES

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The future for Student Services activities cannot be preordained but is a matter of collective judgment by senior college personnel, students and government officials whose perceptions are shaped in part by the economic, political, social and technological conditions of the time. It seems that the desirability for certain student services in our colleges often "clouds" perceptions in defining a clear future scenario for this career field.

Community colleges are a relatively young post-secondary educational system (compared with universities) and, therefore, have not recorded a great deal of material describing its creative efforts in Canada. Likewise, Student Services has not documented many of its practices. As a 'budding' part of the educational enterprise, people were hired for their creative talents and ability to build a service area. Documenting the details of their work was usually set aside in favour of efforts that focused on producing growth within the college system. Since very few Canadian professional associations were available or graduate schools to educate staff in student services work, there was very little encouragement for participants to write about their activities.

In a recent survey (Calder, 1982), the opinions of three distinct college groups were solicited in order to obtain a futuristic perspective on specific student service activities over the next five years. The results are presented in this article to provide practitioners with a much needed knowledge base to help them make critical decisions around further development of the profession.

The future directions for student services were based on the opinions of senior

student se vices officers, college presidents and student council leaders. Basically, they were asked what should be (desirable) and what is likely to be (predictable) the levels of emphasis given to some forty-three student services and college functions in the Ontario college system. The assumption which guided their response was a no-growth situation in terms of funding to the colleges. A consensus gathering technique (Delphi) was used in obtaining the date with over 70% participation from all three groups. The results do reflect the needs of the respondents and their unique role within the college setting. The "territorial response" of the participants would seem to be influenced by the pragmatic valuing of the times (funding restrictions) that the colleges are now experiencing.

As noted in Table I, a college president, charged with overall college accountability, indicated an "umbrella" like perspective in the rating (and prioritized ranking) of the items. Library Services, Audio/visual Services, Computing Services, Student Records, Curriculum Development and Cooperative Education were all ranked higher. The job orientation of the colleges is clearly reflected in the president's responses. Placement was ranked first overall.

Considering that college presidents have a great deal of direct authority and power, it would seem that the focus of student services could change dramatically away from more traditional areas in the future as noted in Table I.

The response of student council presidents reflected their career, personal and academic needs as consumers of the various student and college services. Many items (e.g. Cooperative Education, Student Counselling, Library Services) representing these areas were seen high on the prioritized services. As well,

Table I

List of Rank Ordered Services and Functions -Desirable Level of Emphasis

Rank	Senior Student Services Officers	Rank	College Presidents	Rank	Student Council Presidents
1	Placement	1	Placement	1	Placement
2	Student Councelling	2	Pre-College Information	2	Financial Aid
3	Pre-College Information	3	Library Services	3	Library Services
4	Orientation (classes)	4	Student Records	4	Cooperative Education
5	Career Information	5	Student Councelling	5	Career Information
6	Financial Aid	6	Career Information	6	Student Counselling
7	Student Records	7	Computing Services	7	Computing Services
8	Admin. Organization	8	Professional Development	8	Student Self-Government
9	Orientation (informal grps.)	9	Audio-Visual Services	9	Pre-College Information
10	Applicant Consulting	10	Cooperative Education	10	Admin. Organization
11	Health Services	11	Curriculum Development	11	Athletics (intramural)
12	Student Self-Government	12	Orientation (informal grps.)	12	Research (institutional)
13	Athletics (intramural)	13	Information Services	13	Curriculum Development
14	Applicant Appraisal	14	Admin. Organization	14	Orientation (classes)
15	Student Development	15	Orientation (classes)	15	Instruction
16	Special Student Programs	16	Affirmative Action	16	Audio/Visual Services
17	Research (Institutional)	17	Research (Institutional)	17	Student Regulation
18	Student Regulation	18	Applicant Appraisal	18	Orientation (informal grps)
19	Research (student life)	19	Co-curricular Activities	19	Professional Development
20	Alumni	20	Athletics (intramural)	20	Student Records
21	Educational Testing	21	Special Student Programs	21	Food Services
22	Library Services	22	Food Services	22	Student Development
23	Housing (off campus)	23	Educational Testing	23	Housing (off campus)
24	Co-curricular Activities	24	Applicant Consulting	24	Ministry/Board Regulations
25	Professional Development	25	Student Self-Government	25	Applicant Appraisal
26	Information Services	26	Financial Aid	26	Research (student life)
27	Affirmative Action	27	Student Development	27	Special Student Programs
28	Cooperative Education	28	Instruction	28	Bookstore
29	Educational Training	29	Housing (off campus)	29	Health Services
30	Institutional/Community Consultation	30	Health Services	30	Educational Training
31	Athletics (intercollegiate)	31	Student Regulation	31	Institutional/Comm. Consultation
32	International Students	32	Bookstore	32	Athletics (Intercollegiate)
33	Audio/Visual Services	33	Institutional/Comm. Consultation	33	Applicant Consulting
34	Instruction	34	Alumni	34	Housing (on campus)
35	Ministry/Board Regulations	35	Ministry/Board Regulations	35	Educational Testing
36	Computing Services	36	International Students	36	Information Services
37	Curriculum Development	37	Educational Training	37	Co-curricular Activities
38	Food Services	38	Research (student life)	38	Legal Services
39	Legal Services	39	Athletics (intercollegiate)	39	Affirmative Action
40	Athletics (community)	40	Athletics (community)	40	International Students
41	Chaplain Services	41	Legal Services	41	Athletics (community)
42	Bookstore	42	Chaplain Services	42	Alumni
43	Housing (on campus)	43	Housing (on campus)	43	Chaplain Services

List of Rank Ordered Services and Functions -Predictable Level of Emphasis

Rank	Senior Student Services Officers	Rank	College Presidents	Rank	Student Council Presidents
1	Placement	1	Placement	1	Computing Services
2	Pre-College Information	2	Library Services	2	Admin. Organization
3	Admin. Organization	3	Pre-College Information	3	Pre-College Information
4	Student Records	4	Admin. Organization	4	Library Services
5	Career Information	5	Computing Services	5	Placement
6	Applicant Appraisal	6	Student Records	6	Career Information
7	Orientation (informal grps.)	7	Career Information	7	Student Records
8	Financial Aid	8	Cooperative Education	8	Cooperative Education
9	Orientation (classes)	9	Applicant Appraisal	9	Curriculum Development
10	Student Counselling	10	Food Services	10	Ministry/Board Regulations
11	Student Regulation	11	Financial Aid	11	Athletics (intramural)
12	Athletics (intramural)	12	Curriculum Development	13	Student Counselling
13	Information Services	13	Audio/Visual Services	13	Instruction
14	Health Services	14	Bookstore	14	Research (institutional)
15	Educational Testing	15	Professional Development	15	Applicant Appraisal
16	Ministry/Board Regulations	16	Ministry/Board Regulations	16	Audio/Visual Services
17	Applicant Consulting	17	Educational Testing	17	Bookstore
18	Student Self-Government	18	Student Counselling	18	Orientation (informal grps.)
19	Housing (off campus)	19	Applicant Consulting	19	Health Services
20	Co-curricular Activities	20	Orientation (informal grps.)	20	Education Testing
21	Library Services	21	Orientation (classes)	21	Financial Aid
22	Athletics (intercollegiate)	22	Housing (off campus)	22	Food Services
23	Alumni	23	Information Services	23	Orientation (classes)
24	Research (institutional)	24	Research (institutional)	24	Student Self-Government
25	Student Development	25	Affirmative Action	25	Applicant Consulting
26	International Students	26	Student Self-Government	26	Housing (off campus)
27	Professional Development	27	Athletics (intramural)	27	Athletics (intercollegiate)
28	Special Student Programs	28	Student Regulation	28	Educational Training
29	Cooperative Education	29	Instruction	29	Information Services
30	Research (student life)	30	Co-curricular Activities	30	Special Student Programs
31	Educational Training	31	Alumni	31	Student Regulation
32	Food Services	32	Special Student Programs	32	Institutional/Comm. Consultation
33	Audio/Visual Services	33	Health Services	33	Professional Development
34	Bookstore	34	Institutional/Comm. Consultation	34	Housing (on campus)
35	Legal Services	35	Student Development	35	International Students
36	Affirmative Action	36	International Students	36	Affirmative Action
37	Instruction	37	Educational Training	37	Co-curricular Activities
38	Computing Services	38	Athletics (intercollegiate)	38	Student Development
39	Institutional/Comm. Consultation	39	Research (student life)	39	Athletics (community)
40	Athletics (community)	40	Legal Services	40	Alumni
41	Curriculum Development	41	Athletics (community)	41	Research (student life)
42	Chaplain Services	42	Chaplain Services	42	Legal Services
43	Housing (on campus)	43	Housing (on campus)	43	Chaplain Services

the job orientation of students is noted in the higher priority given to Placement, Pre-College Information and Career Information.

Many of the college functions of the ranked lists for senior student services officers have been part of a more traditional student services program. In examining this list in both the Desirable and Predictable Levels of emphasis, it was noted that they reflected, somewhat, the underlying philosophy and assumptions of the student personnel point of view. The basic assumption of this educational philosophy recognizes individual differences in that every student is unique. The high desirable and predictable priority rating of such services as Placement, Orientation, Career Information, Student Counselling and Financial Aid signified the continued concern of senior student services practitioners for the individual student.

The vision of the future directions for student services is often limited by the background of the people involved. This could explain some of the results, especially those attributed to by the senior student services administrators. As noted in the overall survey results (Calder, 1982), about fifty percent of this group trained in counselling, psychology and sociology, the value that these practitioners place on many services (e.g. Student Counselling, Health Services, Orientation) is quite understandable. However, student counselling which has been most synonymous with student services had received one of the greatest descending rank order changes of all the top ranked items. Although still considered important by this group, it seems that its place in the total student services operation is predicted to diminish and/or change in the next five years.

The idea of student services "branching out" into other service areas did not seem to be a priority for senior student services administrators. However,

the high percentage of participation by these practitioners (over 85%) seemed to denote an interest in voicing their opinions on what they felt should be the future of student services.

It is interesting to note the relatively higher priority all three groups gave to the functions of Institutional Research. Since research is not a priority function of the pragmatic college system, the high ranking could reflect a stage of development for the colleges in which there is a perceived need for evaluation. The rank order of research may be an indication of the college's receptivity to this service being performed.

Although the data reflected a blending of old and new ideas for student services, the group responses and ratings do reveal a concern for present student services administrators in keeping abreast of new findings in the literature. It is important that student services personnel remain flexible, for this kind of information addresses the need for change. With the possible future scenarios presented in Table I and given the kind of budgetary constraints facing the colleges, it seems incumbent upon all administrators to voice a strong commitment to student development ideals.

As stated earlier, the needs of the respondents were reflected in the rankings and thus, the prioritized services helped support and meet their unique needs. The results can give practitioners a comparative picture of the relative values that are placed on various student services by important members of the college community. This information may provide a strategy upon which senior administrators could base decisions for resource allocation and the possible consolidation of some services. The danger of producing a prioritized list of services is that as dollar figures are assigned to items (and they will be!) it forms a kind of "hit" list for cost conscious budget officers in which

lower ranked services could be dramatically reduced or eliminated. However, if the services are important to a college (and we suspect that they are), then a senior student services administrator could possibly integrate lower ranked items with higher ranked items organizationally within the college to maintain the low priority services (although limited). An example of this might be to link services such as Placement and Alumni which were high and low ranked services, respectively. Otherwise, if lower ranked services are isolated from other service areas, they may be lost by budget reductions.

Diffusing the role of student services by integrating functions, can cause 'identity' problems for this career field. However, the objectives are to maintain its service orientation to meet student and institutional needs and to continue fostering student development values on the college campus.

Some future directions for Student Services have been presented here. The information can be used to plan more accurately and effectively for a future that will best meet the needs of the students, the community colleges, and the practitioners. However, considering the consolidation period that the colleges are experiencing (and will continue) and the scenarios offered by the respondent groups, new models for Student Services are likely to take shape in the years ahead. There are many problems impacting the college system which can further change the future directions for Student Services. The assumption here is that these problems will provide student services personnel with opportunities to reposition themselves to assist the colleges in meeting these new directions.

CROSS CANADA SURVEY

In order to further our understanding on the Future of Student Services, sixty-one colleges across Canada were surveyed (excluding Ontario) in the Spring of 1983. Twenty colleges responded to the survey which asked five key questions of senior student services officers. The results are as follows:

A. What do you see as the major forces influencing the future of student services in your college?

(i) Fostering growth and development

A great range of factors were presented. They are:

	Frequency
-increased student body	4
-student needs brought on by stress, career uncertainty	2
-faculty support	2
-cooperative activities between college and student association executives	2
-ability to compliment primary learning mission	2
-senior administration and board understanding and sensitivity to student needs	2
-influx of new ideas and people	2
-need to handle complex admission of non-traditional students	2
-availability of money	2
-adult students demanding services	1

	Frequency
- ability to adapt services to changing student needs	1
- government policy	1

(ii) Restricting growth and development

All institutions surveyed reported limited financial resources as the greatest prohibitive factor. Also staff and facilities were sighted as restricting growth and development. Factors listed were:

- limited financial resources	15
- facilities/space	4
- government legislation (change of educational mission)	2
- perception of second class status	2
- limited length of time students are on campus and tight class schedules	2
- formula financing	1
- change in student needs from personal development to concretes such as placement, career counselling, learning assistance centres	1
- increased student numbers and demands with limited staff	1
- unionized staff seeking job security	1

B. What Student Services do you feel will experience:

(i) Greatest support in next five years?

Greatest support in the next five years was perceived to be for career oriented activities in counselling, assessment, placement, and those day-to-day survival services such as financial aids,

day care, and learning skills for adult students. Services listed were:

	Frequency
- vocational assessment, job search learning assistance centres, work experience placement, aptitude and interest testing	20
- financial aids	4
- Registrar's Office	3
- adult learning activities	3
- learning assistance centres	2
- day care	2

(ii) Maintain their present level of support

The following services were indicated as maintaining level of support:

- health services	6
- counselling	5
- student life/activities	4
- student council liaison	3
- financial aids	2
- high school liaison	2

(iii) Least support in next five years

Least support was expressed for therapeutic counselling, varsity athletics and health services.

	Frequency
- therapeutic counselling	6
- varsity athletics	4
- health services	3

C. What is the major role of the head of student services at your college?

Respondents felt that the major role of the senior student services officer was to "oversee operations", and "manage limited resources effectively" in "coordination with college policies". The second major role was "student liaison" and to act as "student advocate" and "college conscience on student issues". The responses were:

- oversee operations, managing limited resources effectively and do staffing, selection, evaluation	9
- college conscience on student issues/ student advocacy and representing the student point of view on college committees	6
- cooperation with student associations and student liaison	4
- planning, monitoring, public relations	4
- participation in institutional decision making	3
- coordination with college policies	2
- promote student development	1
- academic appeals and discipline	1

D. What is the major contribution of the student services area to your college?

Respondents, although wording their answers in a variety of ways, felt that Student Services' major contribution was to "humanize" thus "managing the environment" or "contributing to the education of students by providing other learning experiences beyond formal curriculum", "adding to skills, attitudes and values of persons". Beyond this main theme there were a variety of specific responses.

	Frequency
- humanize, managing the enviornment, further education of students, add to skills attitudes, and values of mature persons, providing learning experiences beyond the formal curriculum	12
- loans and bursaries	
- placement and vocational counselling	2
- counselling: personal and professional	2
- equal participation with learning/ development process	2
- public information	2
- student advocacy	1
- recreation and athletics	1
- liaison with student associations	1
- one-to-one services to students/requests for help	1
- admit and register students	1
- maintain sense of community	1
- provide leisure and fitness opportunities	1

The cross Canada survey produced a remarkably similar profile to that obtained in more formal research conducted in Ontario (Calder, 1982). It is the author's opinion that although there is a vague image, there

is lacking a clear consensus of opinion as to what role and contribution student services ought to make. There is however a national perception (brought on by economic, political, technological, and social factors) of what services will and will not be supported in the foreseeable future. Clearly, national trends have influenced perceptions and have and will continue to influence directions of service support.

Survey Respondents

Quebec	4
Manitoba	3
Saskatchewan	2
Alberta	6
B.C.	3
Maritimes	2
Total N=	20

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